

When I once more approached, the Wagtail again withdrew with reluctance, and perching near by, awaited another chance to attack. By this time the Silver-eye was much battered, but when I attempted to pick it up, it managed to flutter over a picket fence where it sought refuge in the thick foliage of a Geraldton Wax tree. When I left, the Wagtail was still waiting in a tree nearby, but had not attempted to molest its victim further.

—C. EAKINS, Correspondence Classes, Claremont.

A Mullet Rearing Experiment.—During 1945 when I was on the staff of the Fisheries Department, I interested myself in an attempt to rear young Mullet (*Mugil dobula*) in an ornamental fish pond in a suburban garden. The fish were collected for me by Fisheries Inspector J. Bateman at the Fish Markets Jetty, Fremantle on July 24, 1945 and were transferred to the pond the following day. Nine fish, measuring about an inch in total length (about 2½ em.) were used for the experiment. The pond was set among rose bushes in the front garden of Mr. J. Kerr, 36 Garret Road, Bayswater, and was of oval form, 8 feet long, 4½ feet wide and of a maximum depth of 8 inches. A log was placed in the middle of it, with some river mud and rushes.

Nothing was seen of the fish until one month later when about five were seen skimming across the water. They were not seen again until January 31, 1946, when it was decided to drain the pond. When only about three inches of water remained over the mud, it was noted that there were still fish alive in it. Three of these were captured and their overall lengths were: 7.2, 6.9 and 6.5 em. The pond was refilled with water and the experiment continued.



Garden Pool in which Mullet were raised.

On June 19, 1946 the pool was baled out again completely and five live young mullet were found and measured by Dr. D. L. Serventy. The results were as follows: (1) 8.8 cm. to the caudal fork, and 9.5 cm. overall (2) 8.5 and 9.0 cm. respectively. (3) 8.6 and 9.3 cm. (4) 8.5 and 9.2 cm. (5) 8.2 and 8.9 cm. Thus there had been a mean increase of 2.3 cm. in total length in the 4½ months which had elapsed since the previous measuring and an increase of about 7 cm. since the fish had been placed in the pool the previous July.

Unfortunately that was the last seen of the fish. The pond was again emptied in August, 1946 but there was no trace of them. They were vigorous and healthy when inspected on June 10.

—N. G. HAGAN, Bayswater.

Rains of Fishes?—From time to time, reports of fishes appearing mysteriously after heavy rainstorms lead to claims that such fish have fallen with the rain, having been caught up in a willy-willy. The writer has investigated some of these supposed phenomena, the species concerned in each case being the Spangled Perch (*Therapon unicolor*). While not doubting the possibility of an aerial descent, especially when the fish are of marine origin, the following explanation of what was found to have happened will probably apply to the majority of cases on land.

The Spangled Perch is common to the whole of northern Australia, right across the continent and, in Western Australia, it occurs in large numbers in all the permanent pools and billabongs along the fresh water streams as far south as the Murchison River and its tributaries. When the streams cease running, the fish become concentrated into small pools and, being of a voracious nature, rapidly reduce the available food supply. When the first rains occur in sufficient quantity to run along the ground, the smaller fishes ascend the little runnels and set out in search of pastures new. On one occasion, during a heavy rainstorm during which about 7 inches fell in less than 24 hours, the writer followed some of these fish, which were not 2 inches long, for about 10 miles in a period of 6 hours. The fish were running along what was normally a wheel rut in spinifex desert, the locality being at the headwaters of the Gaseoyne River, some 150 miles north of Meekatharra. Altogether hundreds of small perch were travelling along the wheelrut. Immediately the rain ceased the water soaked into the sand, and there were the fish, stranded high and dry many miles from any known water.

It is natural for a person to seek shelter during a heavy downpour and therefore the actual arrival of the fishes is rarely witnessed. It is not often realised that in a heavy downpour a continuous film of water may extend over the countryside, permitting small fish to make their way along. As soon as the rain stops, the continuity of the water is interrupted.

It was noted that only the younger fishes undertook this hazardous journey, the adults not leaving their pools.